



United States Senator  
**Richard Shelby**  
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



**ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 105TH CONGRESS =  
GREATER FREEDOM/OPPORTUNITY FOR AMERICANS**

As Congress resumes its official legislative session following a week-long respite, I thought it important to emphasize several important accomplishments that benefit all hard-working Americans. This list—which highlights only a few of our legislative accomplishments—is an important reminder of the difference a Republican Congress makes in improving the quality of life for all Americans. In particular, these accomplishments have a couple of critical elements in common: they help to restore fundamental freedoms while encouraging greater opportunity.

In keeping with our commitment to return freedom to individual Americans, this Congress has passed not only the first balanced budget in a generation, but also proposals to provide hardworking Americans with much needed tax relief. While we have a ways to go before we enact the type of tax relief that I believe is necessary for continued economic prosperity into the next century, this is indeed an accomplishment.

We also passed legislation to reform the Internal Revenue Service. This important legislation, which is headed to the President for his signature, will help to return much needed accountability to the IRS. The American taxpayer deserves greater protection from overzealous bureaucrats, and from a system that assumes them guilty. There are literally countless examples of play-by-the-rules taxpayers who are harassed by the IRS. While hundreds of people contact my office each year recounting stories of harassment, I would guess that there are hundreds more who don't call because they don't know where to turn. With the passage of this historic IRS Reform bill, I have every confidence that we will begin to see an IRS that spends more time managing its own finances while taking more care not to harass innocent taxpayers.

While I would prefer to scrap our current tax code and replace it with a single, flat-rate tax, like the Armey-Shelby Flat

Tax plan that I introduced in the Senate, the IRS reform bill is an important first step toward the realization of comprehensive tax reform. In particular, the IRS Reform bill will ensure that taxpayers are treated fairly by creating a new arsenal of taxpayer protections. It will also increase oversight of the agency to prevent abuses, and will hold IRS employees accountable for their actions, while rewarding those employees who work to ensure that the taxpayer is treated fairly. It's not complete tax code reform, but these improvements are steps in the right direction.

Another important accomplishment of this Congress was the passage of the Surface Transportation Act of 1997, otherwise referred to as the ISTEA bill. This bill uses the money America collects in gas taxes to build and repair U. S. highways, maintain bridges, and support mass transit programs. In addition, this bill provided a full 52 percent increase in the federal government's commitment to highway spending compared to the last highway reauthorization bill. Transportation infrastructure has never been more important to our state. In fact, it means the difference between a thriving state economy, and one that is unable to attract new business because of an unworkable and inefficient highway transportation system. The agreement also contained \$1.89 billion for the Appalachian Development Highway System which includes Corridors X and V in Alabama. Alabamians were promised this highway system back in 1965 to improve safety and stimulate economic development. It is time for the Federal government to live up to its promise and complete this deficiency in the interstate system—together with the work of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, which I chair, the ISTEA agreement helps to moves us closer to that goal.

This Congress also passed important legislation to protect our nation's children, and to help parents better provide for educa-

tional expenses. Similar to efforts I undertook several years ago, this Congress passed legislation to make the failure to pay child support a felony. Parents who fail to honor their responsibilities to their children not only jeopardize the health and welfare of those children, but fail to set a example for those children. This Congress recognized that hardworking taxpayers should not be forced to pick up the tab for parents who refuse to provide for their children. In fact, the timing for such an important legislative initiative has never been more important. A parent is a chief role model for his/her children, and the example that the parent sets by honoring his/her responsibilities cannot be overstated—to the child or to society. It is the parent who the child is most likely to emulate, and whose values, lessons and opinions will be mirrored by the child.

The education system in this nation and our state of Alabama has reached a critical juncture. Our children are not as prepared as they need to be when they graduate, nor when they are promoted from one grade to the next. The legislation passed by this Congress provides power and resources for local school districts to hire teachers, buy more computers, and build more schools. It also gives parents incentives and more control to expand opportunities for their children, while testing and rewarding teachers for classroom excellence. Our educational challenges will not be solved overnight, but this legislation provides an important framework from which we can begin to better address many of the problems currently plaguing education in this country.

While these are only a few of the important accomplishments achieved by this Congress, they are extremely significant. I have every confidence that this Republican-led Congress will continue to place the interests of hard-working individuals and American families at the top of its agenda.



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